From Western Fields.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP EXTREMISTS.

What Grain Growers Association Demands—Manitoba's Provincial Telephones—Alberta and its Railroad Policy—New Bank Buildings in Winnipeg.

Far as the Manitoba Government has gone in meeting the wishes of the Grain Growers Association, the committee of the latter body want it to go farther. In the conference recently held, the Government made plain that it desired to have the elevator commission subject to control by the Governor-in-Council, but the grain growers claim that the Government's proposals are prejudicial to the successful carrying out of the legislation the grain growers have in view.

Then there is the objection made to the Government's proviso that sixty per cent. of the farmers in any vicinity must bind themselves to use exclusively the public elevator, before such will be erected at any point. The "ultras" would like matters so arranged, that they could play private and public elevators against each other so as to secure a minimum charge—let the loss by public ownership under such conditions (and the consequent burden upon the tax-payer) be what it may

Manitoba Finances.

During 1909 the Province of Manitoba spent well on to $5,000,000—of which $2,169,595 was extraordinary expenditure chargeable to capital. Towards meeting these outlays the province raised by ordinary revenue $3,376,982; the balance was met by borrowings, representing an addition to the debt of the province, which now amounts to $11,730,846. It is to be noted, however, that receipts and expenditures on telephones are included in these figures, and if these be eliminated, a balance is left of $161,479 in excess of receipts over expenditures. The sum of $1,004,303 received from the Dominion Government is the largest ever paid to the province by the Ottawa authorities, the item last year being $865,682, showing an advance for the year of $138,620. The increase is chiefly due to the increase of per capita payment of 80 cents per head, which this year was calculated on a population of 461,625, as against 365,688 in 1908.

Debentures and treasury bills of the province issued and now outstanding make up a total liability apart from guarantees of the province amounting to $11,730,346, being an increase over the statement of a year ago of $2,041,633. The new issues responsible for this increase in the debt of the province are principally for telephone construction debentures.

The statement of guarantees given by the province shows that up to the end of last year the province's indirect liability on account of the Canadian Northern Railway had reached these figures: Lines in Manitoba, $11,854,286; Winnipeg terminals, $3,000,000; lines in Ontario, $5,745,586; total, $20,599,872.

The second annual report of the Manitoba Government telephones shows an apparent surplus of $372,000 in operating. The total expenditure was $782,000, and total receipts were $754,000. Some $967,887 was spent on capital account. It will not be easy to tell for some time yet, whether the provincial accounting fully avoids the common mistake, under public ownership, of too little provision for depreciation. There are now 5,180 miles of long distance lines. Two years ago there was 3,350 miles. The total number of subscribers is 25,300. There are 7,000 farmers with rural phones, and 5,000 subscribers were added this year, an approximate total of 11,000 in two years. The increase in revenue for the year is $140,444.

The Railroad Tangle in Alberta.

Legislative matters are strongly to the fore in the West just now. The resignation of Hon. Mr. Cushing, Alberta's Minister of Public Works, has given rise to conjecture and discussion not a little. Disagreement with Premier Rutherford as to the agreement with the Alberta and Great Waterways has been the cause of this party split. Edmonton correspondence states that the terms of the contract (made, it is said, in Mr. Cushing's absence from his department) are believed to have been practically as follows:

(1) Roadbed to be of loam ballast and 56-pound rails, the same as the Crow's Nest. (2) Company to be paid the full amount of $20,000 a mile at the end of each ten miles completed (3) If the full 350 miles of the road is built for less than the contract price, the difference to be given to the company upon the completion of the road. (4) Spurs to be paid for at the rate of $20,000 a mile.

It seems to be Mr. Cushing's opinion that $20,000 per mile is largely above the likely cost. A resolution introduced into the Legislature by a private member and seconded by Mr. Cushing, alleges that as the company's paid-up capital is only $50,000 and the Government aid offered excessive, the privileges of the company should be expropriated, and the construction of the road undertaken by a Legislative Commission. It will be recollected that $7,400,000 5 per cent. bonds of the road were guaranteed as to principal and interest by the Province. The high rate of interest, considering such a guarantee, was considerably criticized at the time of the London flotation.

Winter Wheat Shipments.

Wheat shipments via C.P.R. to St. John have been much larger this winter than last, and have done much to swell the road's traffic receipts.

Up to February 16, the C.P.R. reports show that 55,494,000 bushels had been marketed since September 1, an increase of 6,285,000 bushels over the same period of the preceding season. During the same interval 49,608 cars had been loaded and shipped, an increase of 2,930 cars, or 2,930,000 bushels, most of this was shipped by the short rail haul to Fort William, but during January the C.P.R. shipped 3,300 cars of wheat by the long rail haul to St. John, an increase of 885 car loads over the same month in 1909—or 885,000 bushels.

Within the next year and one-half the Bank of Montreal will have erected in Winnipeg a branch building that promises to be one of the handsomest bank structures in Canada.